

Appl. No. : 09/928,977
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CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1-8: (canceled)

9. (original) A system for providing fee-based access to content, comprising:

a service provider site that collects payments from users, including single-action payments initiated from pages of external sites; and

a content provider site that is external to the service provider site, the content provider site comprising a content page, and including an additional page that includes a selectable link to the content page, said link including a reference to the service provider site to allow the service provider site to collect payments;

wherein selection of the link by a visitor who is registered with the service provider site causes the service provider site to charge the visitor a fee for accessing the content page and causes the content page to be displayed by a browser of the visitor, whereby the visitor may pay for and access the content page with a single action.

10. (original) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site is responsive to selection of the link by redirecting the browser to the content page.

11. (original) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site causes the content page to be displayed together with a payment confirmation message.

12. (original) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site causes the content page to be displayed together with a control for allowing the visitor to negate payment of the fee.

13. (original) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site includes a link creation tool which creates coding for embedding single-action payment links within external web pages.

14. (original) The system as in Claim 9, wherein the service provider site and the content provider site are operated by independent entities.

15-40: (canceled)

41. (original) A method for providing payment-based access to a digital work, comprising:

hosting the work on a content provider site in association with a link to a payment service provider site;

on the payment service provider site, in response to selection of the link by a user:

(a) collecting payment from the user; (b) generating a string containing transaction information associated with the payment; and (c) redirecting a browser of the user to a destination location on the content provider site such that the string is passed to the content provider site with a destination URL; and

on the content provider site, determining whether the string passed with the destination URL is valid to determine whether the user is authorized to access the work.

42. (original) The method as in Claim 41, wherein the string is passed in an encrypted form.

43. (original) The method as in Claim 41, wherein the link is to a payee-specific pay page hosted by the service provider site.

44. (original) The method as in Claim 41, wherein the link is a single-action payment link which, when selected, causes both (a) payment to be completed, and (b) the browser of the user to be immediately redirected to the destination location, whereby the user completes payment without viewing the payment service provider site.

45. (new) A computer system that provides a network-based payment service, the computer system comprising:

an electronic data repository that stores account data associated with each of the following: (a) a plurality of users that are registered to make payments via the payment service, (b) a content provider that is registered with the payment service to collect payments from the registered users for accessing content provided by the content provider, and (c) a web site operator that hosts, on a web site, a payment link that is selectable by the registered users to pay for and access the content provided by the content provider; and

a server system coupled to the electronic data repository, the server system responsive to selection by a registered user of the payment link on said web site by

charging the registered user a fee for accessing the content and causing a web browser of the registered user to access the content;

wherein the server system divides the fee between at least the web site operator and the content provider, such that the web site operator and the content provider each receive a portion of the fee.

46. (new) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system causes the web browser to access the content by returning a redirect message to redirect the web browser to an external web location that is separate from said web site and said server system.

47. (new) The computer system of Claim 46, wherein the server system hosts a web-based application that provides functionality for the user to specify said external web location, and to associate the external web location with the payment link.

48. (new) The computer system of Claim 46, wherein the server system includes an encrypted access string in a target URL portion of said redirect message to enable the external web location to verify that the registered user is authorized to access the content.

49. (new) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system is configured to process the selection of the payment link as a single-action transaction, such that the registered user is charged the fee and is provided with access to the content without having to perform any subsequent action.

50. (new) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system determines an amount to be paid to the web site operator by calculating a commission that is dependent on the fee.

51. (new) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system divides the fee between at least the web site operator, the content provider, and a service provider that operates the payment service.

52. (new) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the web site is an external web site that is not hosted by the server system.

53. (new) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the content is served to the web browser by the server system.

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54. (new) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the server system hosts a web-based application that provides functionality for payees to design payment links, and to publish such payment links for web site operators to host.

55. (new) The computer system of Claim 54, wherein the web-based application additionally provides functionality for a payee to specify and publish a commission amount to be paid to the web site operators for referrals resulting from the payment link.

56. (new) The computer system of Claim 45, wherein the content is an article authored by the content provider.

57. (new) A computer-implemented method for providing user access to content and for allocating user payments for accessing such content, the method provided in association with a link hosted by a first web site of a first entity, said link being selectable by users during browsing of the first web site to pay for and access content, the method comprising:

detecting selection of said link by a user, and in response to said selection: (a) charging the user a fee associated with accessing the content, and (b) causing a web browser of the user to access a web page that includes or provides access to the content, said web page associated with a second entity, and being part of a second web site that is separate from the first web site; and

dividing the fee between at least the first entity and the second entity, such that the first and second entities each receive a portion of the fee;

wherein the method is performed by a networked computer system that implements a payment service, said networked computer system being separate from the first web site.

58. (new) The method of Claim 57, wherein the second web site is separate from the networked computer system, and the step of causing the web browser to access the web page comprises sending a redirect message to the web browser.

59. (new) The method of Claim 58, wherein the redirect message includes an encrypted access string that, when passed by the web browser to the second web site, enables the second web site to confirm user authorization to access the content.

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60. (new) The method of Claim 58, wherein the redirect message redirects the web browser to a URL pre-specified by the second entity via a user interface of the networked computer system.

61. (new) The method of Claim 57, further comprising allocating an additional portion of the fee to a provider of the payment service.

62. (new) The method of Claim 57, wherein the first and second web sites are external to the payment service.

63. (new) The method of Claim 57, wherein the web page is served by the networked server system, and includes or provides access to content uploaded to the networked server system by the second entity.

64. (new) The method of Claim 57, wherein the user is charged the fee, and is provided access to the content, solely in response to selection of the link, such that the content is provided to the web browser without the user performing any action subsequent to selection of the link.